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ABSTRACT

A practicum sought to improve the quality of involvement of fourth- and fifth-grade parents in a southeastern United States elementary school. Despite indications of active involvement in some school events, parents were not involved in student education in a way that affected academic performance. Three outcomes for the 13-week project were defined: (1) increase active parent involvement from 50 to 80 percent; (2) improve parents' attitudes toward involvement by 40 percent; and (3) increase by 50 percent the amount of educational time parents spent at home with children. Strategies for improving parent involvement included nontraditional homework, parent-child performance activities, parent education classes, and a school-based parent resource center. Measurement devices used to assess these outcomes included comparison of parent surveys, return rates of homework assignments, and parent attendance at program activities. According to these measures, all the program objectives were met successfully. (Appendices include newsletters, correspondence, handouts, surveys, and tabulations of results. Contains 21 references.) (TM)

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INCREASING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT BY MOTIVATING PARENTS OF FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS TO BECOME MORE MEANINGFULLY INVOLVED IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

by

Michelle T. Morrison

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A Practicum Report

Submitted to the Faculty of the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

The abstract of this report may be placed in a National Database System for reference.

January 1994

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Abstract

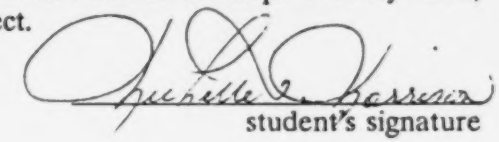
Increasing Parental Involvement By Motivating Parents of Fourth and Fifth Grade Students to Become More Meaningfully Involved in Student's Education.
Morrison, Michelle T., 1994. Practicum Report, Nova University, Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Parent Participation/ Parent Resource Center/ Parent-Teacher-Student Informal Social/ Parent Workshop/ Instructional Video.

The program was developed and implemented to improve the quality of parent involvement in an elementary school setting. Parents of fourth and fifth grade students were members of the target group. The objectives for this program were to increase active parent involvement with the site school to 80 percent, improve parents' attitudes towards involvement in children's education by 40 percent and increase the amount of educational time parents spent with children at home by 50 percent. The program contained multiple strategies for improving parent involvement: untraditional homework assignments, parent-child performance activities, parent education classes, and school-based parent resource center. All the program objectives were met successfully. This was measured by comparing parent surveys, homework assignment return rates and attendance at program activities. Appendices include a helpful hints newsletter, parent information letter and parent surveys.

Authorship Statement/Document Release

Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my work, presented here, will earn similar respect.



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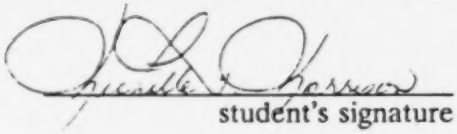

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

The setting for the practicum took place in a southeastern state school district comprised of 29 elementary schools, 11 middle schools and 6 high schools. There were a total of 52,270 students in this district. The 29 elementary schools served 25,265 students. The racial/ethnic composition of the district's population included 76 percent White, 15 percent Black, seven percent Hispanic and two percent from other races.

The practicum was conducted at an elementary school in a small, southeastern town. The school was heterogeneously grouped for students in grades kindergarten through fifth with an average of 25 students per class. The student population came from middle-high, socio-economic families. The site school served an affluent, suburban community. The majority of the students were walkers and bike riders. Two buses transported students to school. Student mobility was low. Attendance records indicated only six percent of the student population enrolled in the site school at the beginning of the year and withdrew before the last

day of school.

Based on information from social histories, the student population came from traditional, single-parent and blended families. After school, students were supervised by parents/guardians or older siblings. The school provided an after-school program. There were 20 students in attendance. Due to the lack of interest, the program was not offered in the future. The student body consisted of approximately 816 students. Of these 816 students, 88 percent were White, 4 percent were Black, 5 percent were Hispanic and 3 percent were Asian. Free and reduced lunch reflected 9 percent of the total student population.

There were 40 members on the instructional staff, including art, music, physical education, media and guidance positions. Sixty-eight percent of the instructional staff had 10 or more years of teaching experience. The Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs in this school consisted of two Specific Learning Disability classes (SLD), two Emotionally Handicapped (EH) classes and one Speech and Language class. The remainder of the staff consisted of two administrators and 25 support members.

The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) had a strong membership of approximately 95 percent of the total

parent population. The staff was equally as supportive and had 100 percent membership. The PTA was active in providing the site school with computers, playground equipment and other needed items through several fund-raising projects during the year.

The writer was the music teacher at the site school and has been an elementary music teacher for five years. The music teacher's responsibilities included teaching music curriculum, encompassing drama, dance, singing, playing instruments, music history, theory, and performance. In addition, the writer has been responsible for coordinating the music curriculum with the academic curriculum.

Music was a compulsory subject for every student at the site school. The students came from a variety of backgrounds and were on various academic and musical levels. Students attended one, 40-minute, music class per week. Fourth and fifth grade students had the opportunity to choose to participate in an unauditioned, after-school, performance group which met three times per week for one-hour periods and performed many times throughout the school year.

Problem Statement

The problem at the site school was lack of active parent involvement in spite of a healthy parent

membership in the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Last year the PTA raised $6000.00 for a third playground. Parents were visible on campus during the school day. Special performances featuring children were highly attended. Nevertheless, the parents were not actively involved in children's education in a manner that affected academic performance or success. The parents were more involved in attending extra-curricular activities, volunteering for enrichment activities in the classroom and donating time to provide refreshments and decorations for special occasions.

One-hundred percent of the 561 families applied for membership in the PTA, but active parent involvement in the organization was lacking. Attendance records at last year's PTA meetings indicated no more than 20 families were represented at each monthly meeting. Efforts to entice at least one parent from each family to become involved through programs, student performances and educational, parent participatory activities were not initiated.

Another outcome of low attendance at PTA meetings was lack of communication and information between the parents and the school. Parents did not receive helpful materials and information offered at meetings. As a result, parents were unaware of ways to become actively

involved. The minutes of the PTA meetings were published in the school newsletter and distributed to all families at the school. The minutes were brief and did not include supplementary information. In addition, a resource center of information was not available. Parents could not access information and communications that were distributed in the parent's absence.

Parents' attitudes towards involvement in children's education were negative. Data collected from an author-constructed, parent, attitudinal pre-survey (Appendix A:41) substantiated the writer's observation. An affirmative response to at least 60 percent of the survey items was used to validate the negative attitude. Parents indicated lack of confidence, confusion and frustration were obstacles hindering active involvement. Ninety-seven out of the 100 families responding to survey item #10 expressed a need for improving active parent involvement.

Teachers at the site school reported negative attitudes and frustration when dealing with parents as evidenced by the results of the teacher attitudinal survey (Appendix B:43) given to 10 fourth and fifth grade teachers. Ninety percent of the teachers expressed dissatisfaction with current levels of parental involvement.

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Through an informal discussion at the time of the survey, teachers reported parents at the school site were less likely to become involved in fourth and fifth grade students' education. Having taught in the primary grade levels in previous years, the teachers observed lower levels of active involvement from the parents of fourth and fifth grade students as compared to the parents of kindergarten and first grade students. The lack of involvement was apparent when time-consuming academic activities, special events or parenting workshops were involved. The observations were substantiated through a comparative analysis of school-wide, parent-teacher conference forms. Teachers in kindergarten and first grade were able to meet with parents 50 percent more than the teachers of fourth and fifth grade students.

The guidance counselor at the site school offered a parent workshop at the site school regarding strategies for improving children's educational success. The workshop was offered to 561 families. Attendance records indicated that 20 families were represented at the workshop. The guidance counselor reported that many parents purportedly did not attend because of time constraints. An alternative format, such as a video of the workshop, was not offered to the parents.

A parent involvement pre-survey (Appendix C:45-46)

was given to 150 families of fourth and fifth grade students. One hundred surveys were completed and returned. Positive responses to questions one and 11 suggested fifty percent of the fourth and fifth grade families were active in ways that positively affected academic performance and success. The principal confirmed this involvement figure through involvement with the School Advisory Council (SAC) and informal observations as the manager of the site school.

Studies published by the National Committee for Citizens in Education showed that schools which maintain frequent contact with parents have students performing at higher levels. Supportive of this position, the National PTA has encouraged parent involvement in the public schools and incorporated this objective into the PTA mission. The principal at the site school has aspired to have 100 percent active, parent involvement in order to increase students' educational success. The principal defined this goal as requiring at least one parent in the family to take an active role in education.

Although 100 percent active, parent involvement was desirable, the goal was unrealistic for a 13-week project. A more realistic and attainable goal selected for this practicum was 80 percent active involvement as measured by the responses to the survey. A discrepancy

of 30 percent existed between the current level of involvement and the desired level.

Outcome Objectives

At the conclusion of the 13-week implementation period, the writer aspired to accomplish the following objectives on the target group of 100 fourth and fifth grade students:

1. Over a period of 13 weeks, the target group involvement at the site school will increase by 30 percent, so that active involvement with the site school is 80 percent as measured by responses to an author constructed parent involvement pre-survey (Appendix C:45-46) and post involvement survey (Appendix D:48). In the specific areas of academic activities, homework assignments and parent workshops, attendance records and tallies will be recorded. A comparative analysis between the number of members in the target group and participation in the activities will also help determine active involvement.

2. Parents' attitudes towards involvement in children's education will be improved. Sixty percent of the target population harbored negative attitudes towards involvement in children's education. As a result of creative homework strategies and informative newsletters, 40 percent of the target group at the site school will

demonstrate an increase in positive attitudes. The measured level of members in the target group that have positive attitudes towards involvement in children's education will be 80 percent. The survey will be readministered at the conclusion of implementation. The attitudinal surveys will be comparatively analyzed to validate the outcome.

3. The amount of educational time parents spend with children at home will increase. Thirty percent of the parents indicate over one hour per week was dedicated to working with children on school-related activities. As a result of participation in practicum implementation activities, 80 percent of the target parents will spend a minimum of one hour per week working with children on school- related activities. This objective will be measured by the number of homework assignments returned by the student and responses to item 7 on the parent involvement post-survey (Appendix D:48).

Chapter II

Research and Solution Strategy

The writer administered a computer search through the Information Retrieval Service and accessed information from the Education Resources Information Center database. A manual search of articles, journals and texts was executed at several community libraries. Information was also obtained through observation at the writer's site school and consultation with professionals in education. The research was conducted in the area of parental involvement in elementary education.

In 1983, the publication, A Nation at Risk, released startling data of the declining state of our schools (Henry, 1991). To combat these problems, many schools have directed efforts towards parent involvement as a means to improve students' education.

Research has provided many justifications for involving parents in education. Since parents are the primary individuals responsible for childrens' learning (Warner, 1991), there is a natural expectation that parents be actively involved with the schools. Bonds are created when parents and schools work together. Chavkin and Williams (1989) verified these bonds transform and

improve education. Parents have been largely overlooked as a vast resource. "Henderson aptly describes a parent as a diamond as big as the Ritz that we think is just a rock" (Chavkin and Williams (1989:161). If schools wanted to overcome the educational crisis, there is a need to utilize this resource.

Szabo (1991) verified businesses have also taken an interest in involving parents in education and have made major financial contributions for the betterment of education. RJR Nabisco has provided grants up to $250,000 per year. Aetna Life and Casualty has spent up to $1,000,000 in support of parent involvement programs (Ramsey, 1992). The Florida Chamber of Commerce stated (1992:2):

> By supporting parent involvement, employers see immediate and long-term results, both in the renewed dedication of today's workforce and in the improved skill level of tomorrow's workforce.

In a survey conducted by Southwest Education Development Laboratory, parents strongly favored involvement in education. Parents were interested in participating in the educational process beyond the "bake sale" level. There were six areas reported by Chavkin and Williams (1989) that parents expressed high interest: school program supporter, home educator, audience, advocate, co-learner, and decision-maker. The survey

demonstrated a consensus among schools and parents as to the importance of the parents' involvement.

Schools have continued to report parents' lack of response to conferences, communications from the teachers, and other school-related issues, despite the results of the parent attitudinal surveys. Brown (1989) suggested these behaviors are not always an indication that parents' attitudes have changed towards roles in education. There were many reasons cited for lack of involvement: feelings of inadequacy, lack of time, feelings of overstepping bounds, uneasiness due to socio-economic difference between parents and the teachers, memories of negative experiences with school, and lack of understanding as to the importance of participation. "It is the responsibility of teachers and administrators to encourage such parents to become involved" (Brown, 1989:3).

Research has indicated there are many positive outcomes of parental involvement in education. Pantiel (1992) verified schools have recorded the students' academic achievement and self-esteem increased regardless of the socio-economic or educational level of parents or guardians. Ostach (1990) stated when parents collaborated with schools, a greater importance was placed on education in the homes. In turn, the student's

attitudes, beliefs and academic successes were positively affected. Interactions between the child and parent increased and relationships were enhanced (Brown, 1989). In addition, Zauber (1993) confirmed the schools profitted by gaining advocates, ideas and innovations.

The practicum writer discovered the role of the parents as a participant in children's education can take several forms. The parent roles have been categorized in the following manner:

1. Educators: Parents contribute to student learning by becoming involved as home tutors, facilitators of home activities and teachers' dividends.

2. Participants in parent education: Parents participate in counseling classes, academic courses and health or social services. Children benefit indirectly through help parents receive.

3. Decision-makers: Parents serve on school improvement committees and share in the process of making decisions at the site school.

4. Advocates: Parents meet regularly with principals, board members and lawmakers as proponents for childrens' rights.

5. School supporters: Parents assist schools by joining parent-teacher associations (PTA), sponsoring fund-raising campaigns and initiating various activities that contribute to the needs of the school and students.

Parent involvement programs that have been implemented incorporate many of these roles. The programs researched have been tailored to accommodate the needs of

the particular schools and communities.

Parents as Educators

Proponents of parent involvement have reported that placing the parent in the role of educator and developing home activities has been very successful. Brown (1989) revealed several reasons for this success. Most importantly, the parent has flexibility in scheduling. Parents had expressed a desire to become involved, but time constraints made it difficult. Home activities afford both the parent and child a relaxed setting, increased interactions, meaningful involvement, closely monitored studies and greater parent-teacher cooperation.

Educators have been innovative in creating ideas to provide parents with home activities. Some activities have always been available to parents, but were taken for granted. Manske (1992) stated that everyday activities which parents normally incorporate into family routines can make a difference in a child's success at school. By emphasizing home values, discussing school issues at dinnertime and verbally interacting with children as much as possible, childrens' education is reinforced. Gardner (1983) emphasized nurturing childrens' talents and avoiding labels that are limiting. If children excel in particular areas, parents should encourage and reward the students for unique abilities.

Other home activities require greater planning for educators and parents. Brown (1989) suggested that parents watch specified television programs with children and follow-up with discussion questions provided by the teacher. The discussion questions would then be incorporated into the class lesson on the following day. Another activity suggested parents take children to the zoo, library or museum, reinforcing skills learned at school. Bettye Bellamy of Fairview Elementary School in Dover, Delaware, designed a unique home activity to set the tone for parent involvement in the classroom (Dismuke, 1991). At the beginning of the year, parents received letters about a class project which pertained to local architecture. Parents were asked to chauffeur children around the community and discuss the various types of buildings observed. Similar building projects were later constructed by the students and placed on display during one of many family nights. This particular innovation demonstrated a more elaborate home activity that incorporated many roles in which the parent could become involved.

Parent Education

Schools have identified parents as the key element to improving childrens' education. However, "Twenty-seven million Americans over the age of 17 are

functionally illiterate and another 45 million are marginally literate, according to the Business Council for Effective Literacy" (Plawin, 1988:107). Many of these people are the parents of students. According to Sorge, Russell, and Campbell (1991), schools across the nation have implemented parent education programs for the immediate goal of increasing parent literacy and the long-term goal of improving student literacy and increasing parent involvement in real educational aspects.

There are several facets of parent education: educating the parents academically, training parents how to better interact with children at home, helping parents with parenting skills, informing parents of the schools' philosophies and programs, and teaching parents how to help children in learning while at home. Studies indicated that assessments of the students, staff and community dictated the type of parent education program that would best meet the needs of the school. Like home activities, parent education programs varied widely in cost, teacher involvement, location and complexity. The following list demonstrates the diverseness of parent education strategies:

1. Videos, lectures, discussions, etc: Presenters from businesses, social services and the community offer information to parents on selected topics of interest (Warner, 1991).

2. Seminars: Local businesses allow employees to attend meetings at the work site during lunch hours (Warner, 1991).

3. Workshops: Parents attend classes about computers, parenting, encouraging children how to write (Roberts, 1988), etc. at varying costs and locations. Child care and transportation are sometimes offered.

4. Training sessions: Teachers and parents attend assorted workshops jointly (Roberts, 1988).

5. Interactive video instruction: Using modern technology, facilitators meet parents' academic needs (Sorge, Russell, and Campbell, 1990).

6. Parents as Partners in Reading Program: Courses designed to teach parents how to read to children (Road, 1988).

7. Parent Child Literacy Intervention Program: This program is devised to develop parents' literacy skills and improve parent-child interaction (Carlson, 1991).

8. Scribe training: Parents are instructed how to take dictation of childrens' stories, improving parental skills as well as facilitating student learning (Walde and Baker, 1990).

Decision-makers

The practicum writer has observed a movement in education towards sharing the school decision-making process with parents. Schools have established school advisory councils (SAC), composed of parents, teachers, and community members empowered to make important

decisions about funding, curriculum and other school-related issues. Special education has provided parents the opportunity to participate as decision-makers by including parents in creating individual education plans (IEP) for exceptional education students. Including parents in this capacity gives parents a meaningful reason for becoming involved and builds relationships between parents and the schools that will endure (Pantiel, 1992).

Advocates

Fordham University (1988) expressed in "Parents Make a Difference" that parents are ideally suited for protecting the rights of children with regard to education. Parents are encouraged to be physically present at schools and in the classrooms. Pantiel (1992) specified parents need to become involved by attending board meetings, preparing for parent-teacher conferences and meeting annually with principals. This form of parent involvement promotes childrens' success in schools.

School Supporters

Parent involvement has been the basis for the establishment of the PTA and other similar groups. As members of these organizations, parents are afforded a united, collective voice that speaks loudly for

children. These organizations have enriched the schools by providing useful information to the community and parents. In addition, organizations have provided needed volunteers and financial assistance through fund-raising campaigns. Parents benefit from the support and comradery these groups render. "Through the PTA, parents can address a variety of educational needs and really affect the process of being informed..." (Pantiel, 1992:36).

Providing the means for parent participation only satisfies the objective when parents have committed to being involved. In order to encourage and promote parents to participate, schools have been utilizing brainstorming and problem-solving techniques to develop strategies that will entice parents to become involved in children's education. Jefferson Elementary in Summit, New Jersey included the following in a program as a means to attract parents: informal parent luncheons, weekly lunchtime student-family reading hour, homework calendars with suggested at-home activities to enhance classroom work and lending libraries of books, games and parent resources (Dismuke, 1991). Roberts (1990) reported that offering a PTA office in the school building made parents feel more welcome and a part of the school. The Indianapolis Public Schools as reported by

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Warner (1991), emphasized parent-teacher conferencing with all the students' families early in the year to open the lines of communication. Monthly newsletters and notes from teachers and administrators sent to the parents on a regular basis were very popular mediums for fostering communication.

Solution Strategy

After researching various approaches to increase parent involvement at the site school, the practicum writer selected the following three areas as target solution strategies. These were:

1. Parents as educators: Information and activities were developed utilizing an organized approach. The information and activities placed the parents in the role of an educator. Interaction between the parents, children and school in a comfortable, non-threatening atmosphere was established as a result. These activities were simple to evaluate and were not excessively cumbersome for the parents and students. Parents' attitudes improved as a result of successfully working on educational activities with children at home and school. In addition, students' academic performance was positively affected and parents became actively involved with the site school.

2. Parent education: A six-week workshop was offered to

parents. Based on a recommendation of the site school's PTA, "Parenting the school-age child in the 90's" was the topic for the course. The opportunity for parents to attend this type of seminar had not been previously offered. The sessions were scheduled to be video-taped for parents who could not attend. Instructional videos were available to parents as well. The videos demonstrated ways parents could help students on homework.

3. Involvement strategies: Innovative approaches were created to entice parents to become involved. An ice cream social and line dance activity were used as motivational tools to promote parent participation. In addition, the site school's music program was employed as a means to promote participation. Academically, the curriculum for the music classroom and regular classroom is inextricably interwoven and integrated. Utilizing the music program activities provided an alternative format to receiving instruction and a successful, non-stressful means of becoming actively involved.

The solution strategies were chosen because of required financial considerations, resource availability and time constraints. Strategies were supported by the works of Warner (1991), Dismuke (1991), Brown (1989) and Chavkin and Williams (1989). Other strategies were disregarded due to present implementation at the site

school such as the establishment of a school advisory council (Pantiel, 1992) and a PTA office in the school building (Roberts, 1990). Other excluded strategies were scribe training suggested by Walde and Baker (1990) and the Parent Child Literacy Intervention Program (Carlson, 1991). Both were inappropriate for the site school's setting.

CHAPTER III

Method

The practicum writer consulted with the principal, fourth, fifth and special area teachers on several occasions prior to implementation. During the discussions the writer received guidance, suggestions and recommendations to resolve the problem. The implementation period lasted 13 weeks.

WEEK ONE: The writer notified and informed the parents and students of the 12-week project (Appendix E:50). Parents of the 100 fourth and fifth grade students indicated participation in the program by signing and returning the bottom portion of the letter. The writer explained the purpose of the various activities and programs that were offered to parents and students. During conversations and informal interviews with the parents, interest and needs of the target group were noted.

WEEK TWO: In an effort to motivate parents to become involved in the project, the writer sponsored an evening ice cream social for parents and students. The writer's team which included two physical education teachers, the art teacher and the ESE teachers attended

the event as well. At this time the parents and students had an opportunity to conference with the writer and express concerns and ask questions. Approximately 70 percent of the target group attended the event.

WEEK THREE: A meeting was held with the Fourth and Fifth grade teachers after school. Discussion included a thorough explanation of the project. The goal of this meeting was to develop information and activities that improved parent involvement. Teachers' ideas for improved parental involvement in students' education were incorporated into the planning and designing of creative and interesting homework assignments. The homework assignments were aimed at improving both musical and academic skills of students. Collaborative efforts to design effective homework assignments were successful. Many members of the target group offered positive remarks through informal feedback. Confirmation of the homework's success was indicated through a high return rate.

WEEK FOUR: A Parent Resource Center was established in the front office of the site school as an involvement strategy to keep parents better informed and to generate parental interest in the school. Information included materials concerning the PTA, social services, community services and events and school-related issues, activities

and events. The information was continually updated. A formal tool was not used to measure the effectiveness of the resource center. The writer observed materials were in need of replenishing on a regular basis and fewer inquiries were being submitted on the topics addressed in the resource center.

WEEK FIVE: The writer sporsored a six-week, parent workshop in conjunction with the site school's guidance counselor. The workshop was conducted in six, 2-hour evening sessions. The topic, "Parenting the school-age child in the 90's", was presented as a result of requests received by the PTA from the parents. The parents were given a choice to have the seminar video-taped for future use and reference or have babysitting services provided each session at no cost. The writer provided the babysitting services when 75 percent of the parents opted for this choice. Attendance records of the workshop were maintained. At the conclusion of the seminar, parents enthusiastically requested additional workshops to be offered in the future. Free child care services, workshop scheduling and topic selection were of major importance.

WEEK SIX: In conjunction with the students' multicultural studies in the regular classroom, the students learned a multicultural song in sign language.

The students first, child-parent homework activity was to spend 10 minutes per day teaching their parents how to perform the song in sign language. The students returned the homework activity sheet with a parent's signature indicating that the requirements of the activity had been fulfilled. The activity was turned in the following week.

WEEK SEVEN: Many parents were limited by time constraints and could not participate in parent education workshops at the school. As an alternative to the original format of instruction, a brief, video demonstration of how parents could effectively help students on homework assignments was sent home with the students. The site school's media specialist videoed the writer giving the lesson in the school's newsroom. There was no expense due to the fact that the school provided the video equipment and presentation space. Duplicate copies were made at the video lab located at the county office. Parents acquired a personal copy for home, video libraries by sending in a blank tape to the writer. The second homework assignment was assigned for completion by the following week. The first assignment was evaluated and returned to the family with positive feedback from the writer.

WEEK EIGHT: The writer conducted a western, line dancing

activity. The writer provided instruction in the site school's multi-purpose room. The lessons were designed for students and parents to attend jointly. The writer coordinated line dancing instruction with the PTA. Prior to the event, members of the PTA board helped by distributing information concerning the event, arranging car-pools for those who needed transportation, and setting up the room for the event. During the activity, several PTA members were taking attendance while stationed at the entrances of the multi-purpose room. Encouraging parents to become involved was the activity goal. By employing the music program, parents were offered a comfortable, non-threatening means of taking on the role of an educator and interacting with children in an educational setting.

WEEK NINE: An informational handout describing effective ways to improve children's educational success was sent home to the parents (Appendix F:52-53). The third homework activity was assigned for completion by the following week. The second assignment was evaluated and returned with positive feedback comments.

WEEK TEN: The students of the target group of parents/guardians performed with parents, singing and signing at the evening PTA meeting. The songs that were performed were included in the previous parent-child

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homework activities that were originally assigned in week four. Students received the fourth homework activity to be completed and returned the following week.

WEEK ELEVEN: Students prepared invitations for the target group of parents/guardians to attend and participate in a class lesson during a school day of the week. Parents had the opportunity to learn how to help students academically. In addition, this activity provided parents with a "bird's eye view" of children's educational needs. Attendance was taken to determine participation.

WEEK TWELVE: Post involvement and post attitudinal surveys (Appendix D:50 and Appendix A:41) were disseminated this week.

WEEK THIRTEEN: The gathered data was compiled this week. The writer met with the teachers for informal feedback and discussion concerning the effects of the project.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The first objective was evaluated by a comparative analysis of questions 4, 5, 11 and 13 on the parent involvement pre-survey (Appendix C:45-46) with responses to questions 1, 2, 6 and 7 on the parent post-survey (Appendix D:48). The objective stated that 80 percent of the target group would demonstrate an increase in involvement at the site school. The parent involvement pre-survey determined that an average of 50 percent of the target group believed that parents were involved in children's education in a manner that would affect academic performance and success. In addition 50 percent of the parents denoted they would like to spend more quality time with children. Evidence of this was further reflected in the target group's response to question 13 on the initial survey. Fifty-three percent of the parents indicated that less than 45 minutes per week was spent working on school-related activities with children.

The comparative analysis of the pre and post surveys reflected an increase in all four areas which were measured (Appendix G:55). Fifty-nine percent responded that most of the parents' time was spent working on

academics, and 79 percent indicated that more quality time was spent with children. Eighty-one percent felt they were more involved in their children's education, and 82 percent spent over an hour per week on school-related activities with children.

Attendance records from implementation activities were used to verify parental involvement (Appendix H:57). Eighty-eight percent of target group attended the evening, ice cream social. This event was very successful and facilitated communication between the parents, students and teachers. The western line dance activity was equally as successful. Attendance records indicated that 82 percent of the target population attended and participated with children. The following week, the writer received 23 unsolicited requests for an additional line dance activity to be scheduled in the Spring. Nine of those requests were from parents who had heard about the activity's success and wanted to participate at a later date.

Twenty-one percent of the target population participated in the parent education course. Prior to the initial meeting, six parents registered for the classes. The writer received many requests for babysitting services. Parents were told lessons would be available on video for those who could not attend.

Nevertheless, members of the target group solicited child care services. The writer agreed to be the child care provider and forfeited the video strategy due to lack of interest. Subsequently, 15 additional members registered and attended the classes. Although the percentage fell short of the author's expectation, those who attended were very appreciative and requested that additional courses be offered at a later date (Appendix H:57).

The function of the instructional video was never fully realized. Eighty-five percent of the target population registered to view the tape. At the conclusion of the project, only 35 percent of those parents had an opportunity to view the tape. The author attributes this to the following factors: deficit of video tapes, lack of viewing time, lost or misplaced tapes and insufficient viewing schedule (Appendix H:57).

The second objective stated 40 percent of the target group would demonstrate an increase in positive attitudes so that 80 percent of the target group would report an increase in positive attitudes towards involvement in children's education. Measurement of this objective was made by comparing the attitudinal survey (Appendix A:41) administered at the commencement of the implementation to the identical survey given at the conclusion of the project. Eighty-two percent of the target group reported

an increase in positive attitudes by a negative response to six or more questions on the survey.

The third objective stated 80 percent of the parents would indicate spending at least one hour per week engaged in educational activities with children. This objective was evaluated by a comparative response to item 13 on the parent involvement pre-survey with responses to item 7 on the parent involvement post survey. Homework was assigned which required the students' and parents' attention for a minimum of one hour per week. The return rate of homework assignments was used as an indicator of time spent on educational activities (Appendix I:59).

Eighty-two percent of the target group indicated over one hour per week was dedicated to educational activities with children. Homework assignments one and three were completed and returned by 81 percent of the parents. Seventy-one percent of the target group satisfied the requirements and returned the second homework assignment. The return rate of the fourth homework assignment was 96 percent.

Overall, the program was successful. The three objectives were satisfied and the rate ot parent involvement increased. With the exception of a few flaws concerning the instructional video and over-projected

attendance rates at parent workshops, the strategies were effective in motivating parents to become involved.

The success of the program can be attributed to many factors. The informal ice cream social and line dance activity generated a lot of enthusiasm and momentum for the project. Both activities were very popular. Parents and students were more eager to engage themselves in the program following these events. Combined efforts of the author, teachers and PTA parents increased with the success of each activity as well.

The author, parents and students were involved as educators, facilitators and participants in the program. Parents indicated the variety of activities and interactions between the school and family were enjoyable and educational. The students enjoyed the program and benefited from the activities and increased involvement.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The practicum author recommends the continual use of this program for the following school year. The Parent Resource Center was helpful in providing information to the parents of the site school. The materials remain readily accessible and well-organized so that parents can easily obtain information throughout the year.

The parent workshops should also be continued in the future. The parents appreciated the knowledge gained and were able to use the information in order to improve relationships with children concerning school and home issues. The workshops proved to be an invaluable experience for both parents and students.

The initial implementation of the program should begin with the ice cream social as opposed to an information letter. This will serve as a more effective orientation to the project. The parents would have an opportunity to ask questions, and the teachers could convey the benefits of the program. Individual components of the program, such as the line dance activity, should be clearly defined on a timeline and described in detail as to what is required from the

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student and parents, and the purpose of the activity.

The instructional video strategy would need revising prior to future implementation. The need for this form of instruction was clearly communicated by the members of the target group. Unfortunately, the method of transporting the tapes from member to member did not accommodate the viewing demand. The strategy would be more effective if the ratio of tapes to members in the target group greatly increased. A detailed check-out system would be essential to improve the overall effectiveness.

The writer was able to consult with colleagues in the educational community who have chosen to implement some or all of the strategies provided in the research. Suggestions for improving some of the flaws of the program were discussed. The writer discovered polling the target group for points of interest would be important to the success of the project. Target group members of this practicum were most enthusiastic about the line dance activity and workshops. As a result, the activities were well-received and more effective at meeting the objectives of the project.

This research was made available to the administration, faculty, staff and parents at the site school. The staff development committee was informed of

the author's intent to present an inservice concerning the research. A scheduled workshop would be scheduled in the future. In addition, segments of the practicum have been submitted to the Florida Elementary Music Educators Association for publication in the annual idea exchange.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARENT ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

APPENDIX A

Parent Attitudinal Survey

When you think about helping your child with homework, providing educational experiences and fostering your child's academic success, do you:

1. Feel confused as to how to effectively meet your child's educational needs? YES or NO
2. Feel frustrated when working with your child on educational activities? YES or NO
3. Feel that the amount of homework assigned is often overwhelming? YES or NO
4. Feel uncomfortable with or dislike the type of homework that is assigned? YES or NO
5. Feel that you would enjoy working on educational activities with your child if they were more interesting? YES or NO
6. Place value on the quality of homework assignments as opposed to the quantity? YES or NO
7. Feel lack of confidence when helping your child with school-related activities? YES or NO
8. Feel that you would spend more time with your child educationally if you experienced more success doing so? YES or NO
9. Feel that parent workshops could be helpful in improving children's academic success? YES or NO
10. Feel that there is a need to improve meaningful parent involvement in children's educational experiences? YES or NO

APPENDIX B

TEACHER ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

APPENDIX B

TEACHER ATTITUDINAL SURVEY

When you think about working with parents concerning academic activities, parent workshops, homework assignments, do you feel:

(Circle all that apply)

1.	Frustration	yes	or	no
2.	Comfortable	yes	or	no
3.	Confusion	yes	or	no
4.	At ease	yes	or	no
5.	Agitation	yes	or	no
6.	Defeated	yes	or	no
7.	Success	yes	or	no
8.	Overwhelmed	yes	or	no
9.	Failure	yes	or	no
10.	Anger	yes	or	no

APPENDIX C

PARENT INVOLVEMENT PRE-SURVEY

APPENDIX C

Parent Involvement Pre-Survey

Date:_____

Please fill out the following survey and return to your child's music teacher. The information will be used to help meet the needs of you and your child.

Please circle your response.

1. In general, could parents be more supportive of their children's education through their active involvement in educational home activities and participation in academic events at school?
   YES OR NO

2. Do you agree that parents are very interested in participating in their children's education?
   YES OR NO

3. Do you agree that parents often volunteer to chaperone for field trips?
   YES OR NO

4. When you volunteer in the classroom, do you agree that most of your time is spent helping the students with their academics?
   YES OR NO

5. Would you like to spend more quality time with your children?
   YES OR NO

6. As a means of becoming more involved, would you be interested in attending and participating in a classroom lesson with your child?
   YES OR NO

7. Would you be more willing to work with your children at home on academic activities if you were given suggestions?
YES OR NO

8. Would you agree that there is a correlation between student achievement and parent involvement?
YES OR NO

9. Do you agree that children and parents would take a greater interest in homework if it were more creative and interesting?
YES OR NO

10. Do parental attitudes towards education and schools affect their children's attitudes?
YES OR NO

11. Ultimately, would you like to be more actively involved in your child's education in a manner that will affect academic performance and success?
YES OR NO

12. If a short video was sent home that gave ideas and demonstrated effective ways to help your child educationally, would you watch it?
YES OR NO

13. How many <u>minutes per week</u> do you spend working with your child on school-related activities?

0 - 15, 15 - 30, 30 - 45, 45 - 60, over 60

14. Would you attend and participate in a line dance workshop with your child as a means of becoming actively involved with your child in a learning environment?
YES OR NO

15. If an informal, evening social was offered as an opportunity to meet and speak with teachers and administration, would you be more motivated to take an active role in your child's education?
YES OR NO

APPENDIX D

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POST-SURVEY

APPENDIX D

POST PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Please fill out the following survey. The information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the parent involvement program. Please circle your response.

1. When you volunteered in the classroom, do you agree that most of your time was spent helping students with their academics? yes or no

2. Do you agree that more quality time was spent with your children? yes or no

3. Do you feel that the quality time you spent with your children positively affected your children's performance at school? yes or no

4. Were you more willing to work with your children at home on educational activities when you were given suggestions? yes or no

5. Do you agree that you took a greater interest in homework because it was more creative and interesting? yes or no

6. Ultimately, do you feel like you are more involved in your child's education? yes or no

7. How many <u>hours per week</u> do you spend working with your child on school-related activities?

   1/2 hour, 1 hour, 1 1/2 hours, 2 hours

APPENDIX E

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER

APPENDIX E

PARENT INFORMATION LETTER

September 1, 1993

Dear Parents,

During the next twelve weeks, I will be implementing a program that is designed to improve students' skills and foster parent involvement in their education. There will be a variety of creative homework activities that your child will be working on during this period. In addition, you will have the opportunity to participate in parent workshops and take on the role of an educator. Keep in mind that the goal is to positively affect your child's education through your involvement. I encourage you to spend some time working with your child on these activities as much as possible. I hope you will find this program to be enjoyable as well as informative.

Please fill out the bottom portion of this letter and return it your child's teacher by Friday. I look forward to working with you and welcome your ideas and suggestions!

Sincerely,

Michelle T. Morrison

My child, _____, and I look forward to participating in the twelve week program. We are eager to receive further information concerning our involvement.

_____

(parent signature)

APPENDIX F

PARENT INVOLVEMENT HANDOUT

APPENDIX F

PARENT INVOLVEMENT HANDOUT

Dear Parents,

I have been researching alternative ways parents can reinforce their children's education. Many of you are unable to make yourselves available during the school day due to employment and various other obligations, yet are interested in helping your child. The following is a list of suggestions that I have compiled from various authors and journals. You've probably taken some of these activities for granted because they are so simple, or will find that you are doing some of these already! Every little bit helps our children be more successful. I hope you will find some of these suggestions to be helpful.

1. Verbally interact with your children as much as possible.

2. Choose a dinnertime when the family can eat together. This is a terrific opportunity to discuss school issues with your children.

3. Praise your children for their unique abilities and avoid labels that limit them.

4. Take your children to the zoo, library or museum. It's an inexpensive, educational, quality excursion that you and your children can experience together.

5. Establish a study area and specific homework time for your children.

6. Make school supplies readily available.

7. Make yourself available to your children while they study. Your children will be more willing to ask questions if you're in close proximity.

8. Be patient with your children. School work can be very frustrating. Encourage your children to persevere and praise them for their efforts.

9. Set an example for your children. Let them observe you reading books and magazines, balancing the checkbook and writing letters.

10. Read to your children at bedtimes or any convenient moment. Provide reading materials that they will enjoy reading.

11. Provide interesting educational games as an alternative to nintendo and television. There is a variety of appealing educational computer and board games on the market (or create your own!)

12. Write your children notes and request an answer in writing. They should be light-hearted and brief in nature in order to elicit the best response.

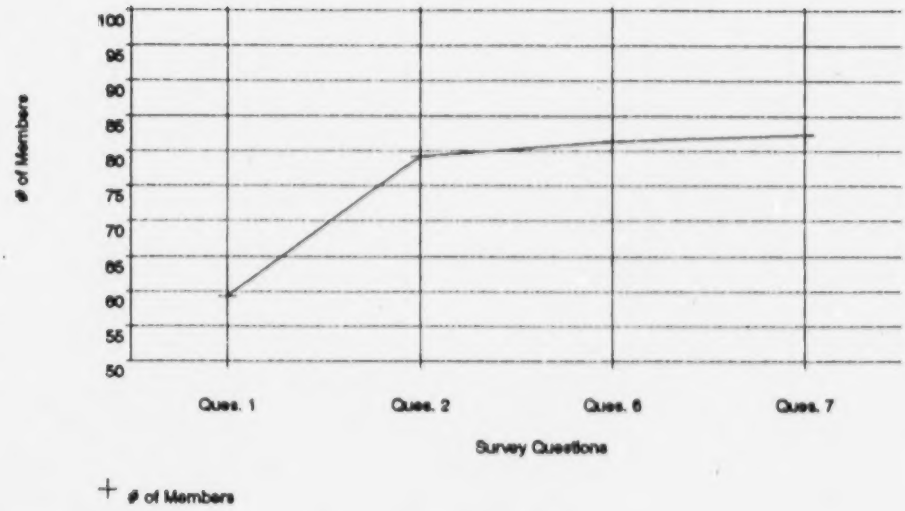
13. Take a few moments to draw, scribble, or write silly poems, riddles or songs.

APPENDIX G

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

Appendix G

Parent Involvement Survey Results



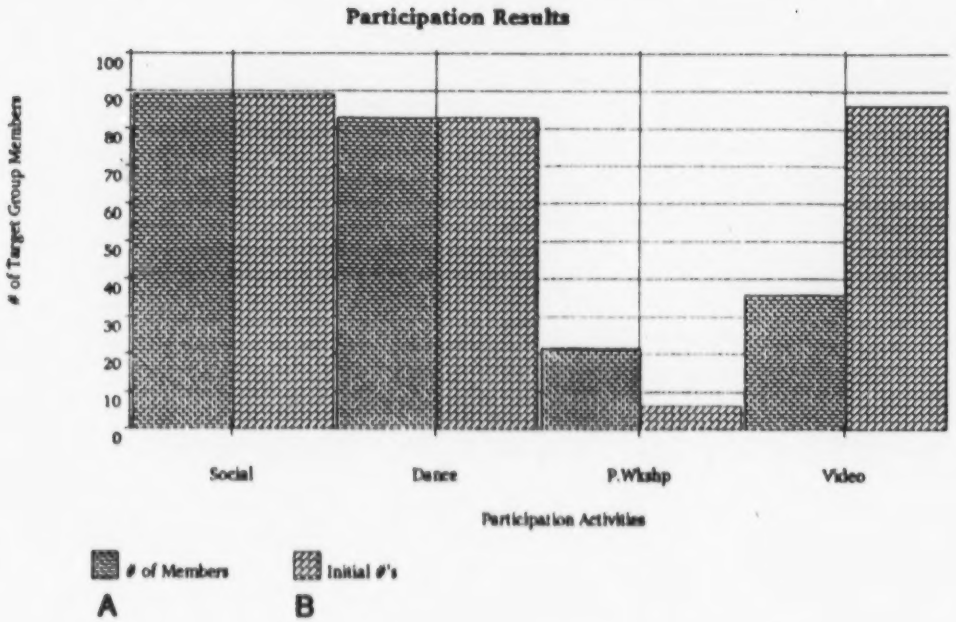
The graph represents positive responses to questions 1, 2, 6 and 7 on the parent involvement survey.

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPATION RESULTS

Appendix H

Participation Results



Group "A" represents the number of target group members participating in practicum activities.

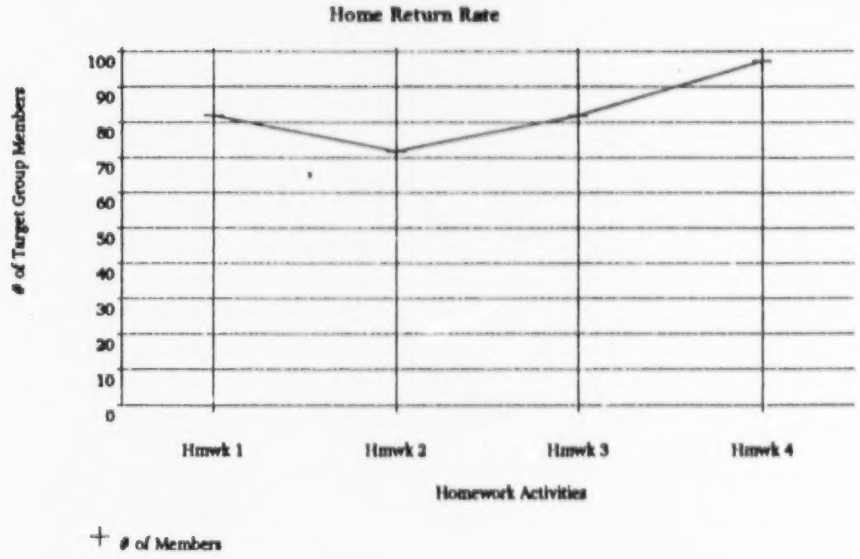
Group "B" represents the initial number of target group members registering for practicum activities.

APPENDIX I

HOMEWORK RETURN-RATE

Appendix I

Homework Return-Rate



The graph represents the number of target members completing homework assignments 1, 2, 3 and 4.